

The Barn, Mount Pleasant Farm, Rendham, Suffolk RNM 019

Historic Building Record

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The Barn at Mount Pleasant Farm, Rendham, Suffolk

(TM 3585 6487)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant barn and attached sheds. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, 18th November 2009 ref. SpecHBR(EM)MntPleasantFm_Rendham_2247_09), and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion from Suffolk Coastal District Council (application C/07/2247, condition 9).

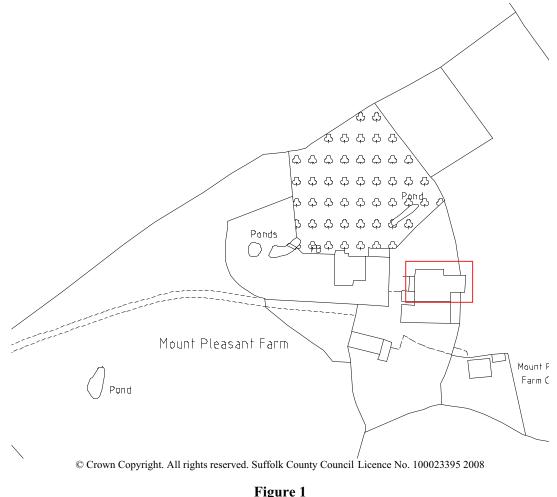
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 90 digital images (Appendix 1), but also includes 10 printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The site was inspected on 22^{nd} March 2010.

Summary

Mount Pleasant Farm lies on the crest of a hill in open countryside approximately 1 km northeast of Rendham village. At the time of the Rendham tithe survey in 1840 the farm was a modest tenanted holding of 54 acres owned privately by the Reverend Ellis Wade of Blaxhall Rectory (the affluent rector of Blaxhall and incumbent of Wantisden). The parish tithe map of 1840 shows the existing barn to the east of the farmhouse and a thatched granary of 18th or early-19th century origin which lies outside the scope of this report.

The barn is a timber-framed and weatherboarded threshing barn of three bays with a central entrance in its southern elevation and a contemporary lean-to porch to the north. It preserves an intact roof of staggered butt-purlins which contains tie-beams to the central bay but pairs of A-framed trusses to the two long outer bays; an unusual method of increasing headroom. Both the tie-beams and A-frames incorporate bolted knee-braces rather than tenoned archbraces and indicate a date of *circa* 1820-30. The framing includes much re-used timber but rests on a tall brick plinth and is of high quality, reflecting its 'gentry' ownership. The building survives largely intact and represents a good 'Napoleonic barn' illustrating Suffolk's agricultural boom in the wake of wartime import restrictions: It is accordingly of both historic and structural interest. A threshing floor of stone flags is probably an original feature, and the external weatherboarding preserves good evidence of its original grey pigment where protected within a number of later additions (a common treatment in East Anglia before the advent of tar as a by-product of town gas in the late-19th century). Despite these points of interest, however, the building has lost its thatch and much of its cladding and probably fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing - although the case is marginal. The piecemeal addition of numerous animal sheds and shelters in the late-19th century is also typical of the region, which compensated for lower grain prices after the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 by introducing mixed animal husbandry. The resulting complex is unusually complete, having altered little in outline since 1904, but several individual structures were rebuilt in the 20th century and are not of particular historic significance in themselves.



Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan Enclosing the barn in a red rectangle and showing the farmhouse to the west, the thatched granary to the south-west and Mount Pleasant Farm Cottage to the south-east. No buildings on the site are listed. See figure 6 for a detailed breakdown of the barn complex.

Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Mount Pleasant Farm lies on the crest of a hill in open arable countryside approximately 1 km north-east of Rendham village. The site is reached by a dedicated track from the west. At the time of the Rendham tithe survey in 1840 the farm was a modest tenanted holding of 54 acres (17.5% pasture and 82.5% arable) owned by the Reverend Ellis Wade (in a private rather than an ecclesiastical capacity) and occupied by Cornelius Snelling. Wade was the affluent Rector of Blaxhall and incumbent of Wantisden, occupying what White's Suffolk Directory of 1844 describes as 'a neat residence' with 80 acres of glebe in the former parish.

The tithe map (figure 2) shows the existing barn, which would have been newly built at the time, but the farmhouse (shown in red to the west) differs in outline from the present building and was probably replaced soon afterwards. The modern farmhouse is an unlisted rendered structure with a slate roof and ostensibly dates from the mid-19th century. A thatched granary and cartlodge south of the house was also shown in 1840. The site was named only as 'house, garden, etc.' on the tithe apportionment (no. 276 in figure 2). The ground to the north was an orchard (275), while the adjoining field on the east (274) was named as 'Old Orchard' and the pasture to the south-west as 'Home Meadow' (277). The field immediately south of the barn yard (287) was 'Neathouse Piece', suggesting that one of the buildings south of the barn



Figure 2 The Rendham tithe map of 1840 (Suffolk Record Office) showing the surrounding farmland and western entrance track much as it remains today.

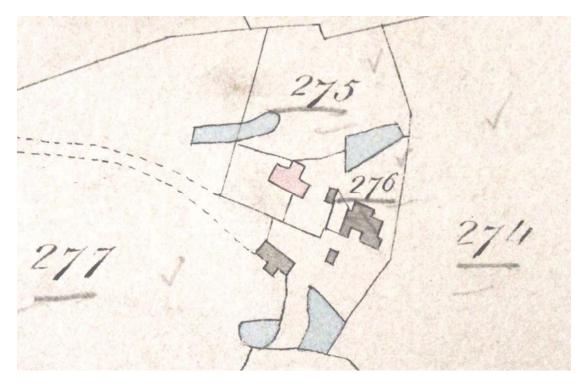
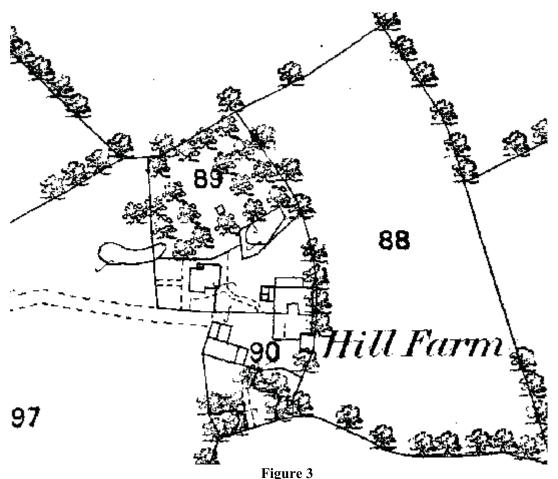


Figure 2a Detail of the 1840 tithe map, showing the outline of the existing barn (then newly built) with its lean-to northern porch and southern shelter sheds.



First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1883.

The outline of the main barn remains much as in 1840 but new pig sties have been added to the western gable and two shelter sheds (their open sides indicated by broken lines) to the southern elevation.

was a cow-house, and the sloping fields to the north-west were 'Little Hill' and 'Great Hill' (267 and 268 respectively). The farm was not named on the apportionment but was marked 'Hill Farm' on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1883 (figure 3). The name had changed to 'The Mount' by 1904 (figure 4) and Mount Pleasant Farm' by 1927 (figure 5).

The outline of the barn in 1840 shows the northern lean-to porch (area 1a in figure 6) but as this is not central to the elevation it was presumably adjoined by another structure to the west (of smaller scale than its present successor (12) as it does not extend to the barn's western gable). The southern entrance was flanked by a pair of sheds that may represent the original versions of the surviving lean-to animal shelters (5 & 6) – both of which have been much rebuilt. This outline still survived in 1883, but an enclosed cattle vard had been added to the south with open-sided shelter sheds to the west and east (8 and 11 – although the latter was rebuilt in cement blocks in the 20th century). A pair of pig sties with characteristically small yards had also appeared against the barn's western gable (2 – also much rebuilt in the 20th century). Between 1883 and 1904 the brick feed shed (4) was added to the south-western corner of the barn, with an additional shed which no longer survives on the site of the mid-20th century brick loose box (7). Another shed had been added to the barn's eastern gable, but this too was later rebuilt in cement blocks. A further addition, since demolished entirely, had extended the outline of the lean-to porch to the same eastern gable. This layout of 1904 remained unchanged in 1927, and with the exceptions detailed above is still recognisable today. It is unusual for 19th century farm complexes to survive relatively unaltered in this manner.

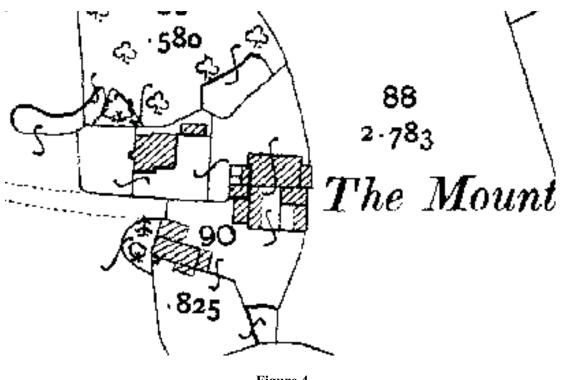


Figure 4 Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904. Showing the addition of the feed shed (4 in figure 6) and sheds which have since been rebuilt on the site of the brick loose box (7) and lean-to bullock shed (3).

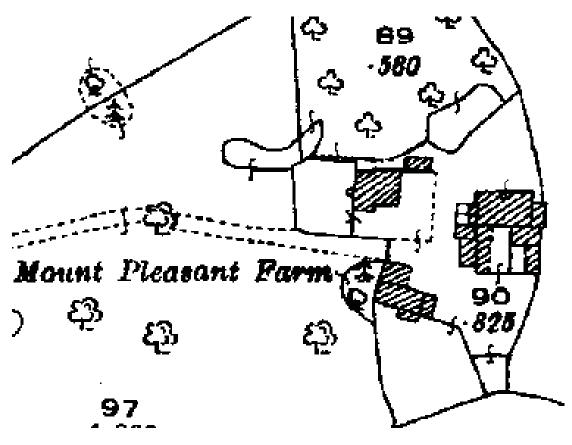


Figure 5 Third Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1927. The farm buildings had not changed since 1904 and still remain much as shown here.

Building Analysis

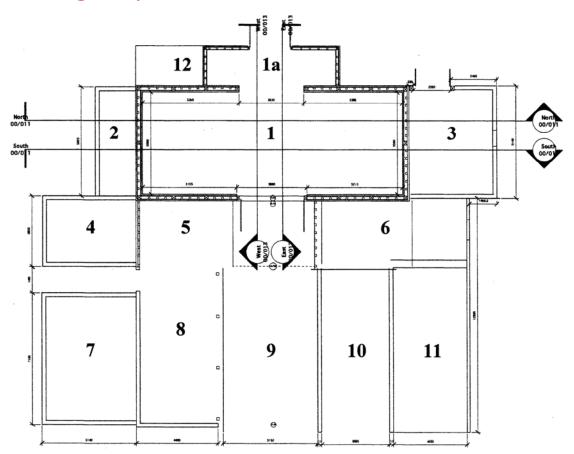


Figure 6

Block Plan of site, identifying each historic building with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. Based on an 'as existing' plan dated 1st March 2010 by Estia Building Consultants Ltd., 7 Temple Yard, London E2, and showing the positions of the internal elevations reproduced below.

Key

1. Early-19th century timber-framed and weatherboarded threshing barn of three bays with an original lean-to northern 'porch'. Principal entrance to south. Staggered butt-purlin roof with tie-beams and bolted knee-braces to central bay but twin A-framed trusses with bolted knee-braces to principal rafters and collars in outer bays. Incorporating much re-used timber. Stone threshing floor in central bay. Formerly thatched but now covered with corrugated iron. Evidence of original external grey pigment preserved within later lean-to sheds. *Circa* 1820-30

2. Mid-19th century lean-to pig sty against western gable of barn. Pantiled. Largely rebuilt with Fletton brick in mid-20th century.

3. Lean-to bullock shed with double doors to north and single door to southern shelter shed (6). 20th century slatted 1.5 metre hay rack attached to eastern gable of barn. Shown on Ordnance Survey of 1904 but entirely rebuilt in cement blocks during mid-20th century. Corrugated asbestos roof.

4. Single-storied brick feed shed with louvered window and entrance in western gable. Scars of removed brick feed bins to eastern interior. Pantiled roof. *Circa* 1900 (shown on Ordnance Survey of 1904 but not 1883)

5. Open-sided lean-to shelter shed to west of barn's southern entrance doors. Shown on Ordnance Survey of 1883 and probably the tithe map of 1840 but rebuilt in mid-20th century leaving only western gable intact. Corrugated asbestos.

6. Open-sided lean-to shelter shed to east of barn's southern entrance doors. Shown on Ordnance Survey of 1883 and probably the tithe map of 1840 but rebuilt in mid-20th century leaving only western gable intact (including original grey pigment to external boarding flanking barn doors). Pantiled roof.

7. Mid-20th century Fletton brick loose box (or small covered yard) for cattle, entered from west. Crittall windows and corrugated asbestos roof.

8. Mid-19th century open-sided shelter shed of brick and timber with pantiled roof. Softwood clasped-purlin roof. Altered in 20th century and retaining mid-20th century wire hay rack of 1.5 m in height. Shown on Ordnance Survey of 1883 but not tithe map of 1840. *Circa* 1870.

9 & 10. Cattle yard with mid-20th century corrugated asbestos roof, divided by mid-20th century cement-block wall into two sections (9 & 10). The wall replaced an earlier wall shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1883.

11. Cement block vehicle shed with southern entrance and pantiled roof replacing an open-sided shelter shed shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1883.

12. Weatherboarded lean-to storage shed in western angle of barn and lean-to porch. Entrance in western gable. Probably shown on Ordnance Survey of 1883 but rebuilt with railway sleepers in mid-20th century. A similar shed formerly existed to the east of the lean-to porch (1a).

N.B. The group of buildings described above forms a good example of an East Anglian farm complex, but the mid- 19^{th} and 20^{th} century additions are not of special historic interest in themselves and only the early- 19^{th} century barn is discussed in more detail below. However the ancillary structures are recorded photographically in Appendix 1.

The Barn and Lean-to Porch (1 & 1a)

Structure and Date

The barn at Mount Pleasant Farm is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure in three principal bays on an east-west axis which extends to 14.6 m in length by 6.2 m in overall width (48 ft by 20.25 ft). Its walls rise to 4 m at their roof-plates (13 ft) including a red-brick plinth laid in English bind of 90 cm in height (3 ft) and contain diagonal 'primary' braces which interrupt the uniform vertical studs but are themselves pegged and tenoned to the ground sills (but nailed to the storey posts). The plinth descends by a further 90 cm (18 cm) to the lower external ground level to the south. The storey posts flanking the central bay of 3.5m in length (11.5 ft) are not jowled and are linked to horizontal tie-beams by original bolted knee-braces. The long outer bays of 5.1 m (16.75 ft) each contain a pair of intermediate posts without tie-beams but linked by bolted knee-braces to the principal rafters of two A-framed trusses with similarly braced collars. This arrangement was intended to increase headroom in the storage sections of the barn and is unusual but not without parallel. The roof structure

consists of staggered butt-purlins and is steeply pitched at approximately 60 degrees for straw thatch but is now covered with corrugated iron. Many individual timbers show evidence of reuse from at least one building of the 17th century or earlier, including empty mortises with incised carpenters' numerals, rafter housings and brace trenches. The carpentry is typical of the early-19th century, when many local barns were rebuilt in response to the high cereal prices during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars (which restricted imports). Earlier 'Napoleonic barns' of this period contain arched tie-beam braces in the medieval tradition, and the presence of a high brick plinth and bolted knees here indicates a date of *circa* 1820-1830.

Original Layout and Cladding

The barn is a standard threshing barn with opposing entrances in its central bay. The existing southern entrance is an original feature, but the late-19th century double-hung doors have been reduced in height (as shown by mortises for the original jambs and a central locking post in the roof-plate). The retaining board remained in situ at the time of inspection (secured by vertical grooves in the jambs). A good threshing floor of stone flags is also probably an original feature, although it may represent a later 19th century replacement: flags of this type were imported from Yorkshire and elsewhere during the 19th century, and similar stones were used in urban pavements. This floor extends into the original lean-to porch against the northern elevation, which is 7.3 m in length by 2.1 m in width (24 ft by 7 ft). The side chambers of such porches were used as granaries and the internal walls against the barn retain original butted horizontal boards (as typically found in purpose-built granaries). Much of the original external weatherboarding has decayed or been renewed, but where protected within the later attached sheds (notably the lean-to against the eastern gable) it preserves original grey pigment beneath secondary whitewash – a common treatment before the arrival of cheap tar as a by-product of town gas production in the late-19th century. The two lean-to sheds adjoining the southern elevations (nos. 5 & 6 in figure 6) are probably contemporary with the barn but have been re-roofed and largely rebuilt.

Historic Significance

The barn at Mount Pleasant Farm is a good early-19th century 'Napoleonic barn' which reflects Suffolk's contemporary agricultural boom. The high quality of its carpentry and brick plinth reflects its gentry ownership (by the Reverend Wade) rather than the small scale of the 54-acre holding to which it belonged. It remains largely intact, with its original lean-to porch and evidence of grey pigment to the weatherboarding, and is of undoubted historic interest, but the loss of its thatch and its relatively late date mean that it probably fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing - although the case is marginal. The piecemeal addition of numerous animal sheds and shelters in the late-19th and 20th centuries is also typical of the region, which compensated for lower grain prices after the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 by introducing mixed animal husbandry. The resulting complex is unusually complete, having altered little in outline since 1904, but the individual structures are not of particular historic significance.

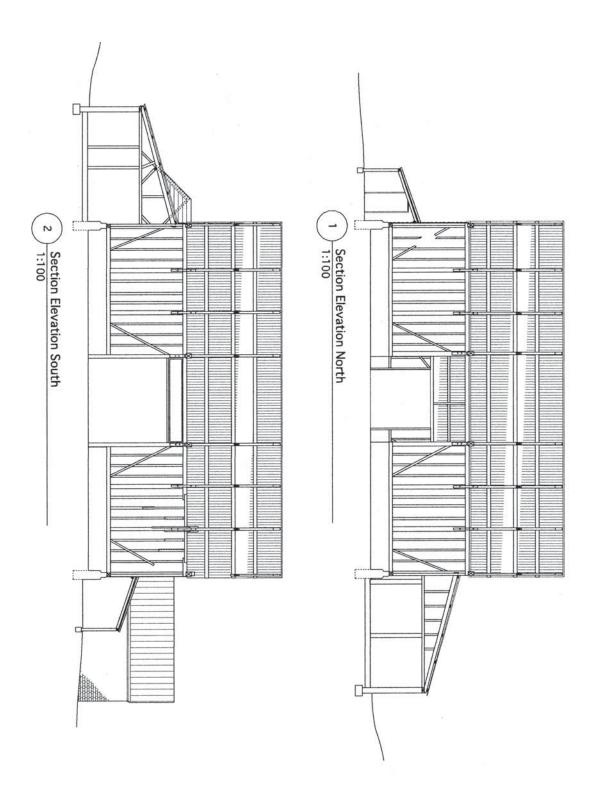


Figure 7 Internal Side Elevations (by Estia Building Consultants Ltd)

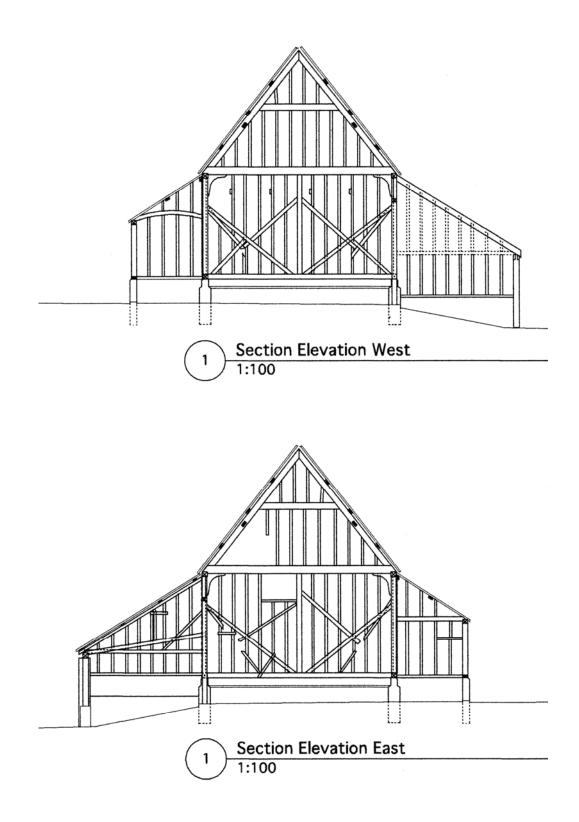


Figure 8 Internal Sections (by Estia Building Consultants Ltd)

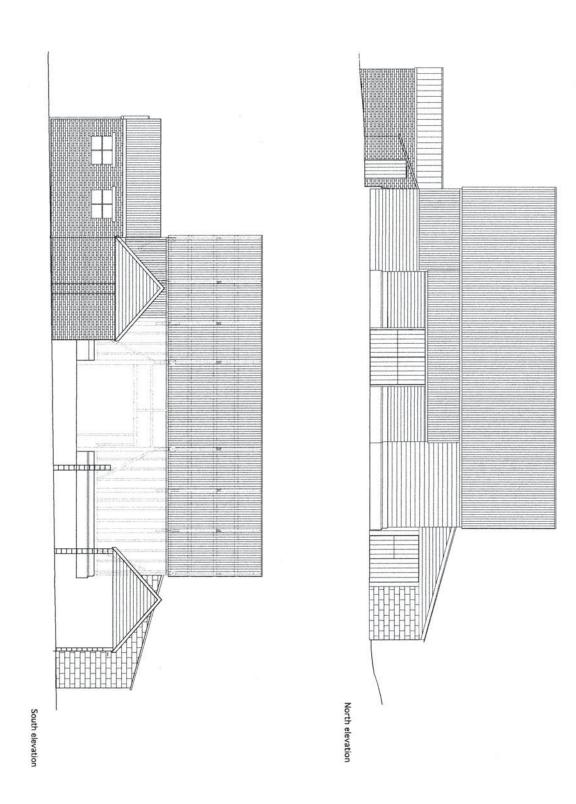


Figure 9 External Side Elevations (by Estia Building Consultants Ltd)

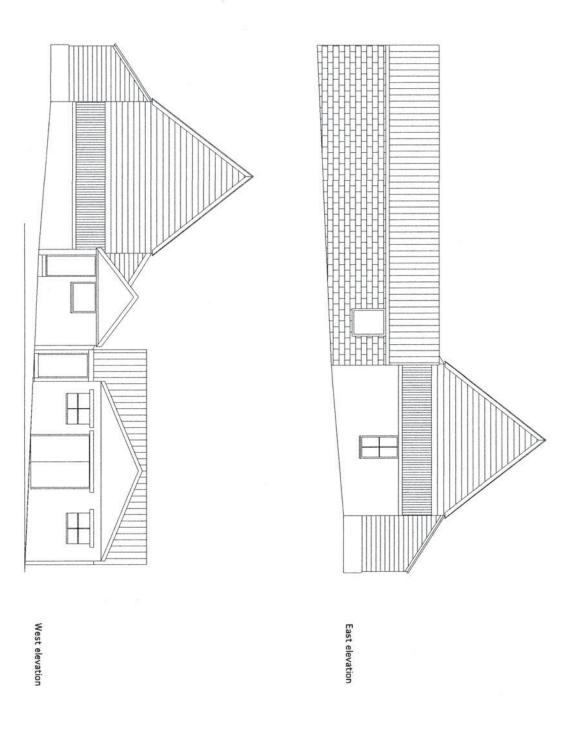


Figure 10 External Gable Elevations (by Estia Building Consultants Ltd)

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

- 1. General view of site from farm track to west showing hilltop location.
- 2. General view of site from west showing farmhouse to left and thatched granary to right with loose box (7) in centre.
- 3. Exterior from north-west of granary at entrance to site. Included for site context.
- 4. General view of site from west showing thatched granary to right, farm complex to left and Farm Cottage in rear.
- 5. General view of site from east showing Farm Cottage to left, farm complex in centre and farmhouse to right.
- 6. Western facade of unlisted farmhouse. Included for site context.
- 7. Rear (eastern) exterior of unlisted farmhouse. Included for site context.
- 8. Exterior of farm complex from south-west showing loose box (7) in foreground and barn (1) in rear to left.
- 9. Exterior of complex from south showing roof of barn (1) in rear and covered cattle yard (9 & 10) in centre.
- 10. Exterior of complex from south-east showing block-work shed (11) to left and barn (1) to right.
- 11. Exterior of complex from north-east showing lean-to block-work shed against eastern gable of barn (1) to right.
- 12. Interior of 20th century block-work vehicle shed (11) from southern entrance.
- 13. Interior from south of eastern section of covered cattle yard (10) showing hay rack to right.
- 14. Detail from south of 20th century hay rack in covered cattle yard (10).
- 15. Interior from south of western section of covered cattle yard (9) showing shelter shed (8) to left and barn doors in rear.
- 16. Boarded gable of eastern lean-to shelter shed (6) from yard (9) to south-west showing barn doors to left.
- 17. Exterior of southern barn doors showing early weatherboarding and tall brick plinth.
- 18. Detail from south-west of grey pigment beneath whitewash of weatherboarding at junction of barn and eastern shelter shed (6).

- 19. Southern exterior of barn to west of entrance bay, seen from western shelter shed (5).
- 20. Southern exterior of barn from eastern shelter shed (6) showing south-eastern corner to right.
- 21. Original weatherboarding of barn from eastern shelter shed (6) showing original grey pigment under whitewash.
- 22. Interior of eastern shelter shed (6) from east showing barn to right and corner of vehicle shed (11) to left.
- 23. Interior of eastern shelter shed (6) from west showing door to lean-to bullock shed (3) to left and vehicle shed (11) to right.
- 24. Interior of covered cattle yard (9) from barn to north showing southern shelter shed (8) to right.
- 25. Interior of southern shelter shed (8) from south showing barn and western shelter shed (5) in rear.
- 26. Interior of southern shelter shed (8) from north showing 20th century wire hay rack to right.
- 27. Detail of 20th century wire hay rack against western interior of southern shelter shed (8).
- 28. Interior from east of western shelter shed (5) showing door to passage between sheds 4 and 7 to left.
- 29. Southern interior of lean-to block-work bullock shed (3) showing door to eastern shelter (6) & hay rack to gable of barn to right.
- 30. Northern interior of lean-to bullock shed (3) showing double doors to exterior.
- 31. Eastern external gable of barn from bullock shed (3) showing hay rack & original grey pigment to weatherboarding.
- 32. Detail of original grey pigment to external weatherboarding of eastern barn gable.
- 33. Exterior of barn from north showing lean-to blockwork bullock shed (3) to left.
- 34. Northern exterior of barn showing evidence of demolished lean-to shed at eastern end, with doors of bullock shed (3) to left.
- 35. Detail of English bond brick plinth and pegged mortises to northern exterior of barn.
- 36. Exterior of barn from north-west showing central lean-to porch (1a) and adjoining shed (12).
- 37. Northern exterior of lean-to porch (1a) showing central doors to threshing bay of barn.

- 38. Western gable of barn from north showing lean-to sheds 12 and 2 (from left to right respectively).
- 39. Western gable of lean-to porch (1a) from secondary lean-to shed (12) showing grey pigment to boarding.
- 40. Interior of lean-to shed (12) showing barn to left and northern wall of re-used railway sleepers to right.
- 41. Interior from north of lean-to shed (2) against western gable of barn (left) showing pig sties to right.
- 42. Exterior of barn from north-west showing lean-to shed (2) against western gable.
- 43. Exterior of lean-to shed (2) showing bricks sheds (4 & 7) to right.
- 44. Western gable of brick shed (4) showing loose box (7) to right.
- 45. Exterior of lean-to shed (2) from west showing Fletton brickwork with pig entrance to right.
- 46. External western gable of barn showing decayed weatherboarding and steep pitch for thatch.
- 47. Exterior of brick shed (4) from west showing door to shelter shed (8) & loose box (7) to right.
- 48. Interior of brick shed (4) from west showing remains of brick feed bins.
- 49. Interior of brick shed (4) from east showing western entrance door to right.
- 50. Roof structure of brick shed (4) from east showing entrance door to right.
- 51. Interior of loose box (7) from north showing entrance in western gable to right.
- 52. Internal western gable of loose box (7) from north-east.
- 53. Interior of loose box (7) showing boarded partition against southern shelter shed(8) from north-west.
- 54. External northern elevation of loose box (7) showing side door from passage.
- 55. Interior of barn (1) from east showing central southern entrance to left and lean-to porch (1a) to right.
- 56. Interior of barn (1) from east showing central southern entrance to left and lean-to porch (1a) to right.
- 57. Western internal gable showing ventilation hatch beneath tie-beam.
- 58. Western internal roof gable showing bolted knee-braces to collars.
- 59. Roof structure of barn from west showing tank on tie-beams flanking midstrey & A-framed outer trusses.

- 60. Eastern roof gable of barn showing bolted knee-braces to A-framed trusses of eastern bay.
- 61. A-framed roof trusses of eastern bay of barn from north, showing tie-beam of central bay to right.
- 62. A-framed trusses of western bay of barn seen from south.
- 63. A-framed trusses with bolted knee-braces of western bay of barn seen from south.
- 64. Detail of bolted knee-braces to roof collars of western bay of barn.
- 65. Internal eastern gable of barn showing diagonal primary wall bracing.
- 66. Southern interior of eastern bay of barn showing central entrance doors to right.
- 67. Detail of wall framing and tall brick plinth of southern interior of eastern bay of barn.
- 68. Interior of southern entrance doors in central bay of barn showing stone floor.
- 69. Detail of roof-plate of central southern bay showing reduction in height of doors.
- 70. Detail of southern internal entrance doors of barn showing retaining board of threshing floor.
- 71. Internal detail of western internal jamb of southern barn door showing groove for retaining board.
- 72. Internal detail of eastern internal jamb of southern barn door showing groove for retaining board.
- 73. Detail of stone flag floor in central bay of barn seen from north.
- 74. Detail of stone flag floor of central bay of barn from south, extending into lean-to porch (1a).
- 75. Southern interior of western bay of barn.
- 76. Northern interior of western bay of barn, showing evidence of re-used timber.
- 77. Detail of northern interior of western bay showing empty brace trenches and mortises of re-used timbers.
- 78. Detail of carpenter's numeral to mortise of re-used timber in northern interior of western bay.
- 79. Detail from west of bolted knee-brace to tie-beam showing rafter housings of reused storey post.
- 80. Northern interior of central bay of barn showing entrance to lean-to porch (1a).
- 81. Detail of face-halved and bladed scarf joint of northern roof-plate behind kneebrace to west of central bay.

- 82. Northern interior of eastern bay of barn showing eastern gable to right and entrance to lean-to porch (1a) left.
- 83. Detail of pegged tenon linking primary wall brace to ground sill in northern interior of eastern bay.
- 84. Interior of double-doors in northern interior of lean-to porch (1a).
- 85. Interior of lean-to porch (1a) showing western grain storage bay with boarding to barn (left).
- 86. Detail of boarding to outer wall of barn in western grain bay of lean-to porch (1a).
- 87. Detail of pencil inscription 'Corn to Mill' on boarding of western grain store in lean-to porch (1a).
- 88. Interior of lean-to porch (1a) from west showing eastern grain storage bay with interior of barn to right.
- 89. Interior of eastern grain storage bay of lean-to porch (1a) showing boarding to barn to right.
- 90. Detail from west of boarding to northern elevation of barn within lean-to porch (1a).

Appendix 2 (pp. 18-22): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. General view of site from west showing hilltop location with unlisted farmhouse to left and thatched granary to right. The brick loose box (7) at the south-western corner of the barn complex is visible in the centre.



Illus. 2. Exterior of farm complex from south-west showing the brick loose box (7) in foreground and the brick feed store (4) to left. The barn (1) is visible in the rear to left, and the southern shelter shed (8) and covered cattle yard to right.



Illus. 3. Eastern external gable of barn within the 20th century cement-block lean-to bullock shed, showing the hay rack and original grey pigment to the weatherboarding (beneath secondary whitewash).



Illus. 4. Exterior of barn from north-west showing the original central lean-to porch (1a) with secondary lean-to shed (12) to right. A similar shed to the left of the porch has been demolished. The lean-to pig sty (2) against the barn's western gable is visible to the right and the lean-to bullock shed (3) against the eastern gable to the left. The brick feed store is shown in the rear to the right.



Illus. 5. Interior of barn (1) from east showing central southern entrance to left and lean-to porch (1a) to right. The central bay is flanked by tie-beams with original bolted knee-braces. Note the floor of stone flags in the same bay (possibly a later hard-standing rather than a threshing floor) and the diagonal primary braces of the eastern gable in the rear.



Illus. 6. Eastern roof gable of barn (1) showing the A-framed roof trusses with bolted knee-braces found in both end-bays. Note the original staggered butt-purlins and the secondary rails of the corrugated iron which replaced the thatch.



Illus. 7. Interior of southern entrance doors in central bay of barn (1) showing the stone floor and double-hung doors with retaining board. The original doors rose to the roof-plate, as indicated by mortises for door jambs in the roof-plate.



Illus. 8. Detail from south of the stone flag floor of the central bay of the barn (1) extending into the lean-to northern porch (1a).



Illus. 9. Detail of face-halved and bladed scarf joint of northern roof-plate behind kneebrace to west of central bay. Rafter housings are visible in the re-used storey post (originally a roof-plate).



Illus. 10. Interior of lean-to porch (1a) from west showing eastern grain storage bay with butted boarding to wall of barn. The northern doors are visible to left, and the interior of barn to right.